A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

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WHITEHALL:

May x^th. M. DC. XC. I.

By *WILLIAM WAKE*, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to Their MAJESTIES, and Preacher to the Honourable Society of *GRAYS-INN.*

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

LONDON,
Printed for Richard Sare, at *Grays-Inn-Gate*, next *Holbourn*, 1691.

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Hebr. iv. 1.

Let us therefore fear, leſt a Promiſe being left us of Entring into his reſt, any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.

THeſe *Words* are the *Application* of the *Apoſtle*'s Diſcourſe in the foregoing *Chapter*. He had there entred on a Parallel betwixt *Moſes* and *Chriſt*; between the *Promiſes* which the One made of a *Temporal Inheritance* to the *Jews* heretofore, and the Aſſurance which the Other has given of an *Eternall Reward* to *Us* now. But as they notwithſtanding thoſe *Promiſes*, yet by their *Sins* and their *Infidelity* came ſhort of them and periſhed in the Wilderneſs, ſo may this be our Caſe too. *God* has indeed called us to a Glorious Hope of *Everlaſting Happineſs*. He has given us all the Security we can deſire that we ſhall One day be made partakers of it. But yet there are *Conditions* required on our parts too, both to Qualifie us for this Happineſs, and to Intitle us unto it: And if we neglect to fulfil them, we ſhall as certainly fail of *Ours*, as ever they did of *Their* Expectations.

Let us therefore fear, *leſt a* promiſe *being leſt us of entring into his* reſt, *any of you ſhould ſeem to come* ſhort *of it.*

For the inforcing of which *Exhortation*, I ſhall obſerve this Method.

Iſt. I will ſhew, that God has *left us* a *Promiſe* of *Entring into his Reſt*; a *Promiſe* enough to ſatisfie all our Deſires, and to engage our heartieſt Endeavours after it.

IIdly. That nevertheleſs we may by our own fault *come ſhort* of this *Promiſe*.

IIIdly. That therefore we ought to be very *fearful* and ſollicitous leſt we ſhould do ſo.

IVthly. That the beſt way to ſecure this *Promiſe* to our ſelves, is to take the Advice of the *Text*, and live in a continual *fear* of *coming ſhort* of it.

And *Iſt*, That *God* has *left us a Promiſe of Entring into his reſt*; a *Promiſe* enough to ſatisfie all our Deſires, and to engage our heartieſt Endeavours after it.

This is that great fundamental *Principle* upon which not only the preſent Exhortation, but in effect the whole Goſpel of Chriſt is built. Whatſoever our Bleſſed Saviour either *did* or *ſuffered* whilſt he was on Earth himſelf, or commanded

us

us to *do* or *suffer* after his Example; All the *Precepts*, all the *Revelations* of the Gospel, are but one continued Argument to convince us of this Truth. Insomuch that what St. *Paul* once said to the *Corinthians* concerning that other great *Article* of our *Creed*, the beginning of our Hope, and preparatory to our Glory, The *Resurrection of the Body*; I may no less apply here to this other of the *Life Everlasting* consequent upon it: If there be no such thing as *another Life after this*, wherein we shall either receive the Everlasting *Reward* of our *Piety*, or suffer the Eternal *Punishment* of our *Sins*; *Then is our Preaching Vain, and your Faith also is Vain.* The whole Business of Religion is a meer Cheat and Illusion; *Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die.* 1 Cor. xv. 14. ---32.

But Blessed be God who has not left us the least room to doubt, in a matter of such importance as this is to us: But has given us such noble *Descriptions*, such repeated *Assurances* of our *Future Happiness*, as may abundantly suffice both to satisfie all our Scruples concerning it, and to ravish our Souls into the most earnest Longings and Desires after it. And tho neither the weakness of our Capacities, nor the Method of the present Discourse will permit me to speak either very much,

much, or very clearly concerning it: yet I shall endeavour at last to give such an Account of the *Rest* here spoken of as may serve to answer the Design of the Argument I have undertaken; And shew with what Good reason the Apostle here exhorts us, to *fear* lest such a *Promise* as this being set before us, we should any of us be so unhappy as to *come short of it.*

Now two things there are that will be necessary to be consider'd by Us in Order to this End: (1*st.*) The *Greatness*, and (2*dly.*) the *Certainty* of our *Future Reward*, That the *promise* which God has *left* us *of entring into his Rest* is as excellent in it self, as it shall be most surely made good to us, if we live so as to render our selves Worthy of it: And therefore ought, upon both these Accounts, to engage us to use our utmost diligence not to *come short of it.*

(1*st.*) For the former of these, The *Greatness* of that *Reward* which God has promised to us in the Gospel: It is a Subject worthy indeed of all our Consideration, but impossible ever to be fully comprehended by Us, till we our selves shall come to the Enjoyment of it. Even St. *Paul* himself, though admitted to the neerest Contemplation of it that ever any Man

was

was, yet could not find out any Expreſſions that would ſerve him to communicate his Idea's of it to us. He tells us that being *caught up into Paradiſe*, He *heard Words unſpeakable, and which it is not poſſible for a Man to utter* 2 Cor. xii. 4. And all he could do was but to declare with *Iſaiah* on the like Occaſion, 1 *Cor.* ii. 9. *That neither Eye has ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man the things which God hath prepared for Them that love him.*

And indeed it is, I think, none of the leaſt Commendations of the Glories of the Other World, that they are not poſſibly to be *comprehended* by Us in this. That their *Excellency* ſo far tranſcends all the Notions of Happineſs we have ever been acquainted with here, that we cannot from thence take any Meaſure whereby to judge of our Eternal Reward. But that after all our moſt enlarged Thoughts, when we ſhall have given the utmoſt ſcope to our Imaginations; have ranged through all the higheſt Inſtances of innocent and un-mix'd Felicity that we have ever heard of in this life: nay, when we ſhall have done yet more, ſhall have indulged our very *Fancies* and *Deſires* to invent ſome new Happineſs beyond whatever any One could poſſibly have enjoyed in this imperfect ſtate of Mortality; We may even then venture

venture to say, that what *God has prepared for them that fear him* is somewhat exceedingly beyond all this: Tho' what it is we are no more able particularly to declare, than we are to measure Omnipotence; or to define what an Infinitely Good and Great God is able to do for them that *Love Him*, and whom therefore he both Loves, and will Bless and Glorifie together with Himself to all Eternity.

But then as in speaking of God Himself, tho we cannot comprehend his Nature, yet by putting together the highest Idea's that we have of Infinite Perfection, we do endeavour to raise up our Souls into some suitable Apprehensions of it: So here, it has pleased God to give such General Descriptions to us of the Glories of the Other World, as may suffice to let us into some imperfect Knowledge of it; and be more than enough both to raise our Desires, and to quicken our Endeavours after it.

For 1*st*. We are told that *Heaven* is a place free from all *Trouble* and *Misery*; from all those *Hopes* and *Fears*, those *Dangers* and *Disappointments*, in a word, from all those *Evils* and *Calamities* that continually disturb us here, and render our highest Enjoyments very flat and insipid to us.

This

This is what our Apoſtle inſinuates, when he calls it by the name of a *Reſt*: *Let us fear*, ſays he, *leſt a Promiſe being left us of entring into his* Reſt, *any of you ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.* And again, *Verſe* 19. *There remaineth therefore a* Reſt *for the people of God.* But St. *John* more expreſly, *Revel.* xxi. 4. where ſpeaking of the *New Jeruſalem*, our *City which is above*, He tells us that There *God ſhall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, and there ſhall be no more any Death, neither ſorrow nor crying, neither ſhall there be any more pain, for the former things are paſſed away.*

Here we live in a *Vale of Miſery*, expoſed to Tryals, and encompaſſed with Troubles on every ſide. He who is the moſt fortunate among us, is yet forced to meaſure his Happineſs rather by the frequent Intervals he enjoys of Comfort and Satisfaction, than by any abſolute Freedom from all Evil and Miſery. We come into the World with a Cry, and go out of it with a Groan, and the Time we paſs from the one of theſe Periods to the other, is for the moſt part fill'd up with little elſe than a melancholy Series of Sighs and Tears, of Doubts and Uncertainties; of Uneaſineſs at what is preſent, and Fearful Apprehenſions of what is to come. So that were we to look no farther than the preſent Condition of mankind, one

might almoſt be tempted to ask with *Job*, *Ch.* iii. 20. *Wherefore is light given to him that is in miſery, and life to the Bitter in Soul? Which look for Death and it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treaſures? Who rejoyce exceedingly, and long when they can ſee the Grave? There the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and there the weary be at reſt. There the Priſoners reſt together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor.*

But when we come to *Heaven*, there we ſhall find a perfect Deliverance out of all our *Troubles*. No pains or Diſeaſes, no Weakneſs or Infirmity ſhall diſturb our Bodies; No Luſts or Paſſions, no irregular Appetites or Deſires ſhall diſcompoſe our Souls, there ſhall be nothing to interrupt or leſſen our Enjoyments. *Heavineſs may endure for the Night* of this World, but when the Bleſſed *Morning* of Eternity ſhall ſpring forth, then pure Joy, and an un-mix'd Felicity ſhall ſpring up with it; and nothing remain but the memory of our former Troubles, the more to increaſe our Comfort and Satisfaction in that Abſolute deliverance we ſhall then have obtain'd from them.

This is the firſt part of that Character which the Holy Scriptures have given us of our *Future State*, It is a *State* free from all Evil and Miſery: And how conſiderable a Bleſſing this

is,

is, if the ſenſe of our preſent Evils be not ſufficient to inform us, I ſhall leave it to the Authority of St. *John* to tell you, *Revel.* xiv. 13. where He makes uſe of this as an Argument to ſtrengthen the Chriſtians of thoſe times in the enduring of any Tryals that could fall upon them for their Religion, that they ſhould in a little time be perfectly deliver'd from all their Miſeries; *I heard a Voice from Heaven, ſaying unto me, Write, from Henceforth Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, ſaith the Spirit, for they* Reſt *from their Labours, and their Works do follow them.*

But this is not yet all, for 2*dly*; When we come to *Heaven* we ſhall not only be ſet free from all other *Evils*, but from that which is the great Source and Foundation of all our Miſeries, from *Sin* too: And from all thoſe Conſequences of it which now fill our Souls with ſo many ſad Reflections, and make all our preſent Enjoyments a meer Dream and a Viſion, the appearances of Happineſs, rather than any real and ſolid Satisfaction, *viz.* the *Fear* of *Death*, and the *Apprehenſion* of *Damnation.*

Here we live in a continual State of War and Danger: Difficulties and Temptations encompaſs us on every ſide; and when we think we ſtand the moſt ſecurely, yet even then we

cannot tell how *ſoon*, or how *dangerouſly* we may fall. The *Fleſh* and the *Spirit*, thoſe contrary Principles of which we are compoſed, ſtill dividing us between our Deſires and our Duty; and forcing us often times when we the moſt ſtedfaſtly reſolve, and the moſt earneſtly endeavour to live well, yet to encounter no ſmall difficulties in the doing of it: And in the ſenſe thereof to cry out with St. *Paul*, *Rom.* vii. 24. *O Wretched Men that we are, who ſhall deliver us from the Body of this Death!*

But *Heaven* is a place Innocent as it is Glorious: There all theſe Conflicts ſhall have an End. No Luſts or Paſſions, no Dangers or Temptations, ſhall either draw us from our Piety, or put us to the leaſt pain for the fulfilling of it. But it ſhall be our *Meat* and *Drink*, the Deſire and Bent of our Affections to live Innocently: And what *David* once ſaid of Himſelf, be much more perfectly accompliſh'd in all of us, *Pſal.* xl. 8. *Our delight is to do thy will O God! yea, thy law is within our Hearts.*

It is one great part of that account which St. *John* every where gives us of the *Bleſſed* in *Heaven*, that they ſpend their whole Time in little elſe than a continued Exerciſe of Piety and Devotion. In *praiſing God*, and *admiring his Perfections*, and *celebrating his Goodneſs*. But eſpecially

especially, in the most Elevated Returns of Love and Gratitude, of Joy and Thanksgiving to Him for the great Work of our Redemption; and for all those Miracles of Mercy by which they have been delivered from Sin and Hell, and translated to such a blessed State of Happiness and Glory.

And indeed what wonder if this shall be the Great Business of our Lives there, when as the same St. *John* tells us we our selves shall be made *like unto him*; Pure and Holy, Enemies to Sin, and to all those Temptations that have heretofore been wont to lead us into Sin. And being thus made *like unto God* in Holiness, we shall become *like* him in Happiness too. For then *Death* and *Hell* shall be destroy'd; *They shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, Revel.* xx. 14. And we shall *sing* for ever that triumphant Song of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xv. 55. *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? --Thanks be to God who hath given Us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Jo. iii. 2.

But 3*dly*, and to go yet farther; We shall not only then be set free from all our *Troubles* and *Miseries*, from whatsoever is any way Grievous or Afflicting to us in this World: But we shall in stead thereof be blessed in a full Enjoyment of the most perfect *Happiness* that our Condition

Condition shall then be Capable of, and that is a Great deal more than we are now able to conceive.

For, 1*st*. Our *Bodies*, which here are the Weight and Burden of our Souls, neither to be supported without Care, nor kept under without Trouble, and which when we have done all that we can, will yet many times afflict us with Pains and Diseases, Weaknesses and Infirmities: Sometimes expose us to grievous Temptations, and too often betray us into the Greatest Sins; to be sure always so clog and depress us, that we shall at best be able to rise up but to very imperfect Discharges of our Duty, shall then be *Glorified*, and rendred a Habitation fit for so Divine a Spirit to dwell in. So our Apostle tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 43. *This Corruptible*, says he, *shall put on Incorruption, this Mortal, Immortality*. We shall not only receive our *Bodies* again out of the Dust, but we shall receive them in Greater Beauty and Perfection, than ever they were before. They shall rise out of their Graves, as the Sun arises from beyond the Mountains of the East; Bright and Shining: Or rather as the Body of our Blessed Saviour when he appeared to St. *Paul* on his way to *Damascus*, *Acts* ix. and in comparison whereof the very *Sun* it self seem'd to be but Dim and Obscure.

See Acts xxvi. 13.

And

And as our *Bodies* ſhall be thus Glorified, ſo our *Souls*, and all the powers and faculties of them, ſhall be no leſs enlarged. *Now we know in part, and ſee as through a Glaſs darkly:* He that is the Wiſeſt amongſt us, and has made the Beſt Progreſs in Learning, is yet ignorant of a Great deal more than he knows, and in what he thinks he underſtands the beſt, is often times miſtaken. *But then we ſhall ſee face to face, and know even as alſo we are known.* All the Myſteries of our Faith, and the Secrets of our Redemption ſhall be laid open to Us: And thoſe Diſputes which now ſo unhappily divide the Church, and diſquiet the Minds of the Beſt Chriſtians, be for ever Determined; not by Force, but Conviction, not by Canons and Definitions, but by an Evident Light, and a clear and diſtinct Perception. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

This ſhall be the ſtate of our Underſtandings in the Other World, nor ſhall our Wills be any leſs perfected. There ſhall be no Repugnancy to the Service of God; No Paſſions or Appetites to Croſs or Encounter in the fulfilling of it. We ſhall be all Flame, and Love, and Devotion: Shall flee to our Duty with the Ardors of *Seraphim*, and ſhall feel ſuch new and unſpeakable Joys ariſing in our Souls from the performance of it, as now we are not able to conceive.

conceive. Only perhaps some pious *Votary* may now and then have felt some Antepasts of them; when having either overcome some great and violent Temptation, or else fulfilled some noble instance of Duty, he finds in Himself such a Serenity of Mind, such sweetness and satisfaction of Spirit proceeding from the Consideration of it, as exceeds all the Sensual Pleasures of the most Exquisite Voluptuary: But which alas! are as far short of that perpetual Joy and Comfort we shall then live in, as the best of our Performances here, are exceedingly inferiour to what the constant discharges of our Piety shall be there.

And being thus prepared for a full Draught of *Happiness*, we shall not fail to enjoy the largest Portion that we can even wish for of it.

What the particular Ingredients of our *future Felicity* shall be, I am not able to say. But this we know, that We shall *live* in the *Presence of God, in whose Presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for Evermore.* We shall Converse with *Angels*, and be translated to the *General Assembly and Church of the First Born, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect.*

Psal. xvi. 11.

Heb xii. 23.

There

There we ſhall meet with all thoſe Great and Wiſe, thoſe Holy and Excellent *Perſons* who in their ſeveral Ages have made up the Glory and Ornament of the Church Militant on *Earth*, and now ſhine as Stars in the Church Triumphant in *Heaven*. Whoſe Vertuous Lives and Patient Sufferings, we have either read or heard of with ſo much Wonder and Satisfaction. By whoſe Learning we have profited; whoſe Diſciples we have profeſſed our ſelves; and whoſe Examples we have look'd up unto, both for our Imitation and our Encouragement.

There we ſhall again be reſtored to our *Friends* and our *Relations*, whom we have here left with ſo much ſorrow and bitterneſs. There we ſhall behold the Bleſſed *Apoſtles* of our *Lord* and *Saviour*, and all the reſt of that *Noble Army* of *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors* by whoſe conſtant *Labours*, and patient *Sufferings*, the *Goſpel* firſt became publiſh'd to the World; and to whom therefore as fellow-workers with *Chriſt*, we our ſelves have in part been indebted for our own *Salvation*. And laſtly, to compleat all; There we ſhall meet with the Bleſſed *Jeſus* Himſelf, the Great *Shepherd* of the *Sheep*, the *Author* and *Finiſher* of our *Faith*, by whoſe *Bloud* we were *Redeemed*, by whoſe *Grace* we

have been *Sanctify'd*, and by whose *Merits* and *Interceſſion* we ſhall have then attain'd to all this *Glory*.

This is that Company to which we ſhall be tranſlated, when we come to die. And then, think if you can what an unſpeakable *Happineſs* it muſt needs be to us to paſs from the vain Converſation of a peeviſh, and wicked World, to ſuch an admirable Society as this: From the Follies and Diſorders of ſinful and frail *Men*, to the wiſe and innocent and endearing Converſation of *Saints* and *Angels*.

I ſhall not for the farther improving of theſe reflections trouble you with any Uncertain Conjectures, of the rare *Diſcourſes*, the Glorious *Entertainments*, the ſincere *Friendſhips*, we may there expect to meet with. What new tranſports of *Joy* ſhall fill our Souls, when we ſhall begin to conſider the *Temptations* we have overcome, the *Dangers* we have eſcaped, and the various *Troubles* we have paſs'd through in our Pilgrimage here on Earth; and compare all theſe with that Peace and Glory we ſhall then Enjoy in the Kingdom of Heaven.

But one thing there is that muſt not be paſs'd by, and that is, that being now inſtated in all this Great Felicity, we ſhall at the ſame time become ſecure of an *Everlaſting Enjoyment* of

of it: That *Our Glory ſhall be Eternal, and our Reward no man ſhall take from Us.* For tho' this be but a *Circumſtance*, and ſo do's not enter into the Nature of our Happineſs, yet it is ſuch a *Circumſtance*, that *Heaven* it ſelf would hardly be compleat without it. But the Greater our Enjoyments were, the more it would trouble us to think that the Time was coming when all this mighty Treaſure ſhould be exhauſted; and We ſhould either altogether ceaſe to be, or which is worſe, ſhould be diveſted of our preſent Happineſs, and become again as poor, and ſinful, and deſtitute, and miſerable, as once we were, or rather to ſpeak more ſenſibly, as we now are. Whereas now, we may without all Anxiety freely rejoyce in the Bleſſings we ſhall enjoy, and take no thought for the future: Being aſſured that our Felicity is founded upon the *Rock of Ages*; Permanent as *Eternity*; Firm and Stable as that God from whom it flows; in whom *there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, and with whom we alſo ſhall continue *for Ever and Ever.* James I. 17. 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.

This is that *Reſt* of which our *Text* ſpeaks: and of this

(*2dly.*) We ſhall moſt certainly be made Partakers, if we live ſo as we ought to do.

For God being not only moſt *True* and *Faithful* in all his Promiſes, and therefore uncapable of deceiving us, but moſt *Powerful* too, and therefore able to Do whatever he pleaſes for us; It cannot be doubted but that what He has promiſed, ſhall moſt aſſuredly be made good to us: And therefore that if ſuch a *Reſt* as this be indeed ſet before Us by Him, we may and ought to depend upon it as a *faithful Saying*,
1 Tim I. 15. *and worthy of all Men to be received.*

Now that the Holy Scriptures have encouraged us to expect ſuch a *Reſt* is ſo very plain, that I do not ſee how any one can have the Confidence to doubt of it. They have not only aſſured us that there ſhall be a *final Judgment*, and an Irrevocable *Sentence* of *Happineſs* or *Miſery* paſs'd upon all Mankind, according to what they ſhall have done, whether *Good* or *Evil*: But they have moreover declared to us, that it was for this very Purpoſe that our Bleſſed *Saviour came* into the *World*, that He *Died* and was *Buried*, and *Roſe again from the Dead*, that He might both *Purchaſe* this Great *Reward* for us, and receive full *Power* and *Authority* to *confer* it upon us. Either therefore we muſt ſay that all this

is

is meer *Fable* and *Romance*; that the whole Buſineſs of *Chriſtianity* is but an *Idle Story*, that has nothing of Truth or Reality in it: Or if we think the *Goſpel* to deſerve any Credit, we muſt conclude that this *Promiſe* ſhall ſtand Firm and Immutable as that God who made it, That if we live according to the Rules of our Religion, we ſhall receive the Reward of it; that Eternal *Reſt* of which our *Text* here ſpeaks, and which I have now been endeavouring to deſcribe to you.

It remains then that there is without all Doubt a Bleſſed Expectation reſerved for us in another Life: but then,

II*dly*. It is as certain, that we may by our own fault *Come ſhort of it*.

For the *Promiſe* of this *Reſt* is not Abſolute, but Conditional. It depends upon a *Covenant* in which there are *Duties* to be fulfill'd on *Our Part*, as well as a *Reward* to be made Good, on *God's*: And if we fail in the One, there is no reaſon to expect that He ſhould perform the Other.

When our Saviour ſent forth his Diſciples to preach theſe *Glad Tidings of Salvation* to the World, we read in St. *Mark* that their Commiſſion

miſſion ran in theſe Terms, *Mark* xvi. 15. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to Every Creature: He that* Believeth *and is Baptized ſhall be* Saved, *but He that* Believeth not, *ſhall be* Damn'd. And what it is we are there to underſtand by *Believing*, we may ſee in the Parallel place of St. *Matthew*, Ch. xxviii. 20. *Go ye and Teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to* Obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you. And from both which the concluſion is very plain, that if we mean to be *Saved*, we muſt not only enter our ſelves into the *Church* of *Chriſt* by *Baptiſm*; but being ſo admitted, muſt *Believe* and *Do* whatſoever he hath required of Us: And without which we ſhall be ſo far from having any right to theſe *Promiſes*, that we ſhall incur the Greater *Damnation* for our Sins.

But this is not yet all; For if the Caſe be ſo as I have now ſhewn it to be, If the *Promiſe* of this *Reſt* be *Conditional*, and we are no Otherwiſe intituled to the *Bleſſings* than as we are careful to fulfil the *Duties* of the Goſpel: Then I muſt add, that We may not only by our own fault come ſhort of it, but that without a Great deal of Care we moſt certainly ſhall do ſo; And therefore ought the more to *Fear* leſt

we

we ſhould fall from ſuch Divine and Glorious Expectations.

The *Righteouſneſs* of the *Goſpel*, and that *Univerſal Obedience* which it requires of us in order to our Salvation, is not a Work of Common and Ordinary Attainment. It calls us to a Great deal more than many of us, I fear, are aware of, I am ſure than moſt of us practiſe. To a Piety that has ſtartled the Conſciences of the moſt perfect Votaries; and once made even the *Apoſtles* themſelves cry out, *Who then can be ſaved?* Mat. xix. 25. Thoſe Severe Duties of *Mortification* and *Self-Denyal*, of *Taking up the Croſs*, and *Following Chriſt*, were never deſigned for meer Pomp and Shew; only to exalt the Credit of the Goſpel, and make it the more admired in the World: But as Helps and Aſſiſtances, to conquer our *Paſſions*, to confirm us againſt all the *Temptations* of a Wicked World, and to raiſe us up to the utmoſt degree of *Piety*, that our Condition would admit of in it; For the Tryals of our *Faith*, and the Exercise of our *Patience*, and in ſhort, to Fit us for Heaven, before they carried us to it.

Men may live as they pleaſe, and content themſelves with a formal and ſuperficial Piety; and think it very well that they ſtand in the ſame Rank with the Generality of the World, and

and have as Good Pretences to Heaven as their Neighbours. But the Commands of God are not to be Evacuated by the Wickedneſs of Men. God has plainly ſet before us the Terms of our Salvation; What we are to *Believe*, and what to *Do*, if Ever we mean to attain unto it. And if notwithſtanding this, Men will be careleſs and negligent in their Duty; *Scepticks* in their *Faith*, and *Atheiſts* in their *Practice*: If they will ſcoff at the *Revelations*, and deſpiſe the *Morals* of Chriſtianity; laugh at the *Divinity* of our *Saviour Chriſt* and the *Holy Ghoſt*, and Live ſo as if they did not believe there was any *God at all*: Let them applaud themſelves, if they pleaſe, in their profane Drollery, and ſtrengthen One Another in Wickedneſs; but let them know aſſuredly that there is a Time coming when neither their *Number* ſhall *Defend*, nor their *Sophiſtry* excuſe them; But for *All theſe things God will bring them to Judgment.*

Eccles. xi. 9.

Seeing then we not only may, but without great care we moſt certainly ſhall *come ſhort* of that *Reſt* which God has prepared for Us, it will I think very much behove us all

III*dly*. To take the Advice of the *Text*, and *Fear* leſt we ſhould chance ſo to do.

This

This is the *Apoſtle's* own Inference in the Words before us, and ſuch as I think naturally ariſes from the foregoing Conſiderations. For ſince it has pleaſed God to call us to ſuch a Great and Precious *Promiſe*, as I have before ſhew'd the *Reſt* here ſpoken of to imply; to a Perfection of Glory and Happineſs which neither any Tongue can utter, nor any Thought conceive: What can be more reaſonable than that we ſhould make it our utmoſt *Endeavour*, the Great *Buſineſs* and *Concern* of our *Lives* Earneſtly to aſpire after it, and by all means to Qualifie our ſelves for the obtaining of it?

The truth is, were we to diſcourſe of this Matter only upon the *Principles* of right *Reaſon*, and according to the Common *Bent* and *Inclination* of our *Natures*, without any regard to the *Practice* of *Mankind*; One might juſtly think that inſtead of arguing with Men upon this Subject, we ought rather to Apologize for the Abſurdity of making that an *Exhortation*, which every Man muſt do whether He will or no. *Happineſs* is that which all Men Deſire, and therefore muſt needs Endeavour to attain unto. And to exhort Men to be *Happy*, to purſue that which is to raiſe them to the higheſt pitch of Felicity that their Condition is capable of: What is this, but as if one ſhould go about to

argue with a *Covetous Wretch* not to neglect a fair Opportunity of growing Rich, or with a loose *Voluptuary*, to Eat and Drink, and fill his Soul with ſenſual Satisfactions; that is, to endeavour by *Reaſon* to incline them to that, which their own *Appetites*, beyond all the *Reaſon* in the World, hurry them on to.

And yet tho' all this be moſt certainly True, that we do all of us Naturally *deſire* that which will make us *Happy*; and it cannot be doubted but that 'tis this *Reſt*, this Eternal *Reward*, in which above any thing the *Felicity* of Man does conſiſt: I know not how, there is ſcarce any thing which Men Generally ſo much neglect, or ſo little ſeem to trouble themſelves about as This. As if the whole Buſineſs of *Religion* were indeed no more, than what ſome profane Men have call'd it, a piece of *State-Contrivance*, a *Device* to keep *Fearful* and *Superſtitious* People in *Awe*: And the *Goſpel-Promiſe* of a *Future-State*, a Refinement only upon the Old Poetick Hypotheſes of *Elyſian Fields*, and I know not what other *Dreams* of *Happineſs*, no where to be found but in their Numbers.

Tell a Man how to eſtabliſh his *Preſent Fortunes*, ſhew him the way how he may accompliſh his Ends in what he aims at in *this World*; and tho' perhaps the utmoſt of His Ambition

be

be but to gain ſome little *Eſtate*, or *Honour*, or *Advancement*, which can neither reward his Pains, nor ſatisfie his Deſires; yet you ſhall not fail to meet with a very ready Attention from Him. He will receive your Inſtructions with Greedineſs, and if they carry but never ſo little a Probability with them, you ſhall need no Perſwaſives to put him upon the practice of them.

But now ſpeak to the ſame perſon of the Vaſt Concerns of *Heaven* and *Eternity*; Exhort him to conſider how ſhort and uncertain his Life here is, how faſt it runs away, and in how little a Time the whole Stock of it will be exhauſted; and that then *He muſt appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, to receive the things done in the Body according to what He ſhall have done whether Good or Evil*: And tho' by an Affectionate Application you may charge to warm Him for the preſent, or even force him, with *Felix*, to tremble at the thoughts of a *Judgment to come*; tho' your Arguments be ſtrong, and his own Conſcience concurs with you to ſatisfie Him that theſe things are ſo as you repreſent them to Him; yet all the Effect ſhall be but this, that He will grow weary of the Admonition, and be uneaſie till he can get away from you; and no ſooner is he at liberty, but he begins pre- 2 Cor. v. 10.

ſently to think how he may ſhake off thoſe dull and melancholy Apprehenſions your Diſcourſe has raiſed in his Mind; and then He becomes the very ſame Man that He was before, goes on again in his *Sins* and *Debauches*, and never conſiders that the End will be that *He ſhall periſh for ever.*

Now this being the General Neglect and Security in which Men live, it cannot certainly but be very proper, not only to Exhort them ſometimes to a greater Care; but if it be poſſible, to convince them too of the Grounds they have to fear, whither ſuch an Incogitancy as this will carry them?

And I*ſt.* If their Indifference in this Matter proceeds from a real Belief that there is no ſuch thing as *Another Life* after this, nor any *Account* to be given to God of all our Actions; that there is neither any ſuch Eternal Portion of *Happineſs* to be enjoy'd, or of *Puniſhment* to be undergone, as we have been told there is: This I confeſs will make their Neglect the more Rational; and we ought not to wonder, if they are not *afraid* of *coming ſhort* of a *Reward*, which they do not believe was ever to be attain'd by them.

But

But then at leaſt they ought to be very ſure that their *Belief*, or rather *Infidelity*, as to this Point is well-grounded, before they venture the Everlaſting welfare of their Souls upon it. For not to ſay any thing of thoſe Aſſurances which the Goſpel has given us of our *Future State*, and the Authority whereof is founded upon ſuch ſtrong and convincing Arguments, that we ſee the greateſt part of the Wiſeſt Men in all Ages have thought there was no reaſonable Exception to be made againſt it.

Do they believe that there is a *God*? That this World was not made without ſome *Cauſe* to produce it, nor is now *Govern'd* and *Preſerved* without ſome Superiour *Power* to overlook and order the Affairs of it? This I am ſure the *Gentiles* themſelves have generally acknowledged, and I much queſtion whether there was ever any Man ſo void of all Reaſon, as to be able ſeriouſly to make a Doubt of it.

But if there be a *God*, and if His *Providence* does overlook the Affairs of Men, there muſt needs be a *Future Judgment*, ſome Day of account in vvhich He *will render to every Man according to his Works*; and thoſe Vertues ſhall be rewarded, and thoſe Vices puniſh'd in ſome other Life, which we ſee oftentimes but little regarded in this. Rom. ii. 6.

Do

Do they believe that they are themſelves endued with *Rational Souls*; that they are not meer *Machines*, a little Maſs of Clay, ſtamp'd with the *figure* of a *Man*, but by ſome purer Principle, raiſed above the Condition of the other Creatures that are below them? But then let them conſider what theſe *Souls* are, and whether they may not poſſibly be of a *ſpiritual ſubſtance*, capable of *Exiſting* by themſelves, when the *Body* falls into the *Duſt*: And if they may, then let them think a little farther, whither they are to go, and what is to be done with them?

In ſhort; Do they believe their own *Senſe* and *Experience*? Let them then tell us why it is their *Conſciences* ſo often check them for the *Sins* they commit, and force them many times to ſtart and tremble at the thoughts of them: And eſpecially then when they are neareſt their *End*, and paſt all danger of *Puniſhment* in *this World*, unleſs it be, that their own *Hearts* then begin to miſgive them, and force them at leaſt to fear the *Judgment* of the *Other*.

But 2*dly*; It may be, tho' they are not abſolutely certain, that there is no ſuch thing as a *Future State*, yet neither are they ſufficiently ſatisfied that there is, and this makes them the leſs ſollicitous about it.

Now

Now if this be the Caſe, then I muſt confeſs that here again there may be ſome Reaſon why they ſhould not be ſo vigorouſly concern'd for the buſineſs of Religion, as thoſe who without all doubt expect a Glorious *Reward* of their Labours. But yet ſtill, ſeeing they are not ſure, but that there may be another *Life* after this, and an Eternal *State* of *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, as we ſay there is; it muſt certainly be the wiſeſt way not to be too ſecure, nor expoſe themſelves to ſo great a Hazard, as either to *come ſhort* of this *Reſt*, if there ſhould be ſuch a thing, or to be loſt and damn'd for ever, as they muſt be, ſhould God chance to call them to an Account for their *Sins*.

And if ſuch Perſons as theſe, notwithſtanding all their *Sceptiſm* as to this matter, ought nevertheleſs to *Conſider and Fear, and do no more Wickedly*; much more, *3dly*, Should we who have no doubt at all of this *Reward*, be very careful not to *come ſhort* of it, nor ſuffer any *preſent Intereſts* or *Temptations*, to deprive us of our *Eternal Glory*.

It is the Great Diſadvantage of the Point before us, that in diſcourſing of the *Happineſs* or *Miſery* of the *Other World*, we talk to Men of ſomewhat at a great diſtance from them; of

Bleſſings

Bleſſings not to be enjoyed till after they are *Dead*, and that they Hope ſhall not be yet a while. Now this makes them for the moſt part ſo very Careleſs in their Proviſions for it, and ſo little apt to be troubled with any *fears* about it. But yet, ſince we are ſure we muſt *Die*, and we cannot tell either *How ſoon*, or in *What manner* we may be cut off, and that ſhould we chance to be ſurprized, and taken away out of our *preſent State*, before we have made any Due Proviſion for the *future*, it will be impoſſible for us ever to retrieve our Neglect: Certainly all theſe Conſiderations ought to engage Us not to let any time paſs in ſecuring of ſo Great a Stake; nor give any Reſt to our Souls, whilſt we have any juſt Doubts remaining what ſhall be our *final Portion* for ever.

Such Reaſon therefore have we all to be very *fearful* and *ſollicitous* about our *future Happineſs*: And the more to excite us thereunto, let us conſider,

IV: That the beſt way to ſecure to our ſelves the *Promiſe* of this *Reſt*, is to take Advice of the *Text*, and live in a continual *fear* of *Coming ſhort of it*.

And

And that upon these two Accounts: Because (*1st*) This will be the most likely to engage our *own Care*; And (*2dly*) To entitle us to *God's Favour.*

(*1st*) This will be the most likely to Engage *our own Care.*

For *Fear* where it is not a *Slavish Terror* arising in the Mind from an *Apprehension of Punishment for Sin committed*, but a concern for the *Discharge of our Duty*, lest otherwise we should offend God, and deprive our selves of that Reward he has call'd us to; naturally puts Men upon the strictest Guard over themselves, and Care of their Duty. And therefore *Solomon* who very well understood the Advantage of it, sets it forth to us as the first step to a Religious Life, *Prov.* ix. 10. *The Fear of the Lord*, says he, *is the Beginning of Wisdom*: As on the other side, *David*, when he would describe to us a *Sinner* of whom there was no Hopes, could not find out any better Character for him than this, that *He had no fear of God before his Eyes*, *Psal.* xxxvi. 1. And the reason of this is plain; Because where-ever there is such a *Fear*, it shews the Person who has it, to be endued with a just Sense both of his *Duty* and of his *Danger*,

of the *Neceſſity* there lies upon him to *Live well*, and of the great *Hazard* he ſhall run if he *neglects to do ſo*. Nay it ſhews yet more, that ſuch an one is not only *ſenſible* of all this, but does moreover in the conſequence of it reſolve to be very careful and diligent in the Offices of Religion; to ſerve God, and diſcharge his Duty towards him, that ſo he may obtain the *Reward* of it. And where there is ſuch a Diſpoſition as this, it is hardly poſſible that a Man ſhould fail of accompliſhing his Deſires.

For if we look more narrowly into this matter, and conſider what it is that keeps ſo many Chriſtians in ſuch a ſtrange Security with Relation to their *future State*; we ſhall find it to proceed from one of theſe two Cauſes: Either they are not ſufficiently *ſenſible* of their *Obligations* to *Piety*, and of the *Neceſſity* there lies upon them to *Live well*; Or elſe they *flatter* themſelves in their *own Righteouſneſs*, they think they are in a very ſafe way already, and need not aim at any higher Attainments. But now he who has this *Fear* continually upon his Mind, will not eaſily be deluded with either of theſe: But as he will be truly concern'd for his Salvation, ſo he will be always *afraid* that he is not ſo ſecure as he ought to be of it. And this will naturally put him upon yet farther Endeavours

to

to get ſome New and Greater Victories over himſelf; to *Grow* in *Grace*, and come up nearer to *Perfection*, that ſo he may encreaſe in *Hope* too, and have ſtill more full and more comfortable Aſſurances of God's *Mercy* to Him through *Chriſt Jeſus*.

(2*dly*) As ſuch a Fear will be ſure to engage our *own Care*, ſo will it be the beſt means to entitle us to *God's favour*.

For 1*ſt*: This will above any thing qualifie us for the *Gracious Aſſiſtance* of his *Holy Spirit*, to ſtrengthen us in our Endeavours, and to enable us to diſcharge that Duty which is required of Us. *For God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble.* To the *Humble*, that is, to Thoſe who are *fearful* and *jealous* of themſelves; *Conſcious* of their own *Weakneſs* and *Infirmity*, and ſupported only with the *Hope* of God's *Grace*, to help them in time of need. And therefore St. *Paul* upon this very Ground exhorts the *Philippians* to *work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling*; becauſe if they did ſo, then God would not fail to Bleſs them in it, and to *work in them both to Will and to Do of his good pleaſure*. 1 Pet. v. 5. Phil. ii. 12. —— 13.

2*dly*: Such a *Fear*, as it will the beſt diſpoſe us for the *Grace* of the *Holy Spirit* to help us in our Duty, and to fortifie us againſt thoſe Temptations that may chance to ariſe to draw

us away from it; ſo will it the beſt diſpoſe us for the *Pardon* of thoſe *Sins*, which when we have done all that we can, we ſhall ſtill continue more or leſs to commit. Becauſe he who thus *fears*, will either never *Willingly fall into any Sins*, and then there can be no doubt but that he ſhall find a very ready Pardon of his *Involuntary Offences*: Or if he ſhould be at any time ſo unhappy as to be led away by the *Deceitfulneſs of Sin*, yet this *Fear* will ſoon awaken him, and bring him both to a true Senſe, and a deep Abhorrence of it.

Here therefore, if ever, will be an Object fit for God's Mercy. An *Humble*, *Contrite*, *Penitent* Chriſtian: A Man who in his Heart truly loves God, and above all things both the moſt deſires, and the moſt endeavours to pleaſe Him: And is never ſo ſenſibly concern'd, as when he does any thing that he thinks was contrary to his *Duty* to Him.

And having thus put a Man into a *State of Grace*, this *Fear*, *3dly*, to complete all, will be the ſureſt means to enable Him to *perſevere* in it unto the *End*. Whilſt keeping him ſtill under the ſame *concern* for his Salvation, and in the ſame *Apprehenſions* of *coming ſhort* of it; It will by conſequence keep him alſo in the ſame pious Care to live ſo that he may not miſcarry

at

at the laſt, and loſe all the Benefit of his former Piety, for want of going on and continuing in it.

And now when ſo many Conſiderations engage us to the practice of this *Duty*; When the *Reward* propoſed to us is ſo Great, and the *Danger* of miſſing it ſo Fatal, and one of the beſt ways in the World to ſecure it to us, is to live always in a warm concern for it, and under a due apprehenſion of *Coming ſhort* of it: Methinks I could almoſt flatter my ſelf that all this ſhall be ſufficient to prevail with you thus to *fear*, leſt any of you ſhould be ſo unhappy as to fail of it.

Nor let any one think this an improper *Exhortation* for this place. *Fear* is, I confeſs, in General but a *Slaviſh Paſſion*, and ſuch as I can eaſily believe the Greateſt part of this Aſſembly to be but little acquainted with. But yet there are ſome things which the *Philoſophers* themſelves could tell us the Braveſt Men both might and ought to be *afraid* of: And ſure, if any thing, the *Wrath of God*, and *Eternal Damnation*, may well be allow'd to fall under ſuch a Character. Ariſtot. Eth. Nicom. lib. iii. c. 6.

Never was there a *Prince* endued with a truer perſonal Courage than King *David* I need not tell you through how many *Dangers* he paſſed, with

with how many *Difficulties* he encountred, and how *Great* and *Intrepid* he appeared in all his Tryals. And yet notwithstanding all his Bravery, this Great King thought it no reproach to Him to own such a *Fear* as this which I am now recommending to you, *Psal.* cxix. 120. *My flesh*, says he, *O God, trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments.*

Where was there ever a Race of Men that despised, I do not say *Death*, but what is worse than Death, *Disgrace*, *Reproaches*, *Torments*, more than the *Primitive Martyrs* and *Confessors* of the *Christian Church* did? So terrible were their *Conflicts*, that it almost chills our Blood to read the Accounts of those *Cruelties* which they with an admirable Patience and Constancy underwent. The *Relations* of their *Sufferings* look more like *Romance* than *History*: They seem to describe not so much what any Men ever really underwent, as what the *Writers* of their *Lives* thought fit to invent, to magnifie their *Courage*, and Honour their *Religion*. And yet now these are the Men who in their very *Sufferings* shew'd what a *Fear* they had of *Offending God*, and *losing their own Souls*. It was their Apprehension of this that inspired them with that Bravery we now so much admire; and made them dare to suffer any Evils in this World, rather than run the

the hazard of Periſhing for Ever in the Other.

In ſhort, our *Religion* which exhorts ſo much to *fear* in this one Caſe, yet by this very *Fear* inſpires us with the higheſt *Gallantry* and *Reſolution* in all others: Whilſt ſetting before us the Hopes of a *Better State*, it teaches us not to value any Dangers or Difficulties in *This*. It ſhews us how to be *Valiant* upon a Wiſe and Rational Foundation: And whoſoever follows the Dictates of it, He may indeed be more Temperate in the Uſe of his Courage, and place it upon better Objects, and reſerve it for more worthy and more juſtifiable Occaſions than Men are now a days wont to do; but he need never fear he ſhould ever become the leſs a *Brave Man*, for being a *fearful* and *obedient Chriſtian*.

I ſhall conclude all with that Great *Precept* of *Chriſtian Magnanimity*, Luke xii. 4. And which as it is a ſhort Summary of all I have now been ſpeaking, ſo may it, I think, be enough not only to *direct*, but to *try* the Courage of the Stoutest among us:

Fear not them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you ſhall fear; Fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to caſt into Hell: Yea, I ſay unto you, Fear Him.

FINIS.

A Sermon Preached at the Reviving of the General Meetings of the Gentlemen and others of the County of *Dorset*, in the Church of St. *Mary-le-Bow*, *Decemb.* 2. 1690. By *William Wake*, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Majesties, and Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Grays-Inn*.